

Acton Historic District Commission  
Meeting March 27, 2012  
Minutes

RECEIVED  
APR 19 2012

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

The meeting was opened at 7:30 by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB)

Also present were Michaela Moran (MM), David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), and David Barrat (DB). Pam Lynn (PL) arrived at 8:30.

7:30-There were no citizens' concerns.

7:35-The minutes of the March 13, 2012 were approved by consent unanimously.

7:40-Update on process for changing Rules and Regulations, and By-law. KAB The move to change the HD bylaws will entail HDC meeting vote Move off rules and regulations at next town meeting whether it be a special town meeting or the next annual town meeting. Signage changes MM to begin working on the changes this summer to among other things have them harmonize with the town's signage by-laws. DB to help with the drafting.

Two matters relative to the Community Preservation Committee: Department of Revenue will rule on the propriety of the no/low interest loan program to help maintain historically significant properties in town. Until then there will be no loan program and no demolition by neglect by-law. MM We need to write a Demolition by Neglect by-law to deal with projects like WAVE. Framingham and Worcester both have such a by-law. Such a by-law would require a full-time enforcer and is more likely found in a larger community or city.

8:00-Twin Seafood representatives will not appear tonight. They are developing artwork for a proposed awning sign.

Application #1207; 554 Mass. Ave. Window replacement. MM liaison. Owner wants to replace certain windows on the east, south and west sides of his house. The south side is not visible from Mass. Ave. and, thus, not in our jurisdiction. The current windows in question are replacements of the original windows. Although they are a 6 over 6 (6/6) style as were the originals, they are squatter looking. The windows are wood framed, single pane sashes. The proposed replacements are 6/6 Brosco solid cedar with single low-E energy panel. The windows would have the same shape as the ones to be replaced. Replacement would be in-kind. MM Moves seconded by DB to allow the proposed replacement of the current windows described in the application with 2 double hung units on each of the three sides as in-kind replacements of current windows. Windows are to be single-glazed 6/6 with energy panel routed into the sash.

KAB Are the windows appropriate for their locations? The owners might seek approval for these windows as replacements of the prominent front (north side) windows as well. The owners have thus far indicated that they won't. The proposed replacements as discreetly located in the "Ell" of the building.

DH We want all windows to match. These would unlikely be approved for the whole house. Owners are aware of this. Reference is made to the Brosco cut sheet for description of the

actual windows. AR If the energy panel has a low-E glaze, it will look different from the other windows that have standard storm windows because the low-E's have a purple tint. MM The most prominent of the six replacement windows are along the rear of the house and are difficult to see. There are a fair amount of shrubs making them less visible than are the main windows. The low-E look is more purple and will exhibit a "band-aid" effect. Clear E panels won't pass the energy code. Should have examples for us to consider. Amend motion? We need to ask for a sample each of the clear energy panel and a low-E panel. MM Should continue this to allow examination of the proposed windows. They also have a simulated divided light. The muntions don't have the same depth. AR They read completely differently than do a true divided light. Do the owners understand how different they will look?

DH Single glaze with a storm window provides the same energy efficiency as a double glazed window. Single glazed windows look better. The e-panel is not a good idea. Owners would have been here to but for a sports banquet. MM had left a voice mail. MM to call the owners to explain our concerns for their choice of windows; the use of low-E panel rather than a plain panel, and the preferred use of storm windows. MM will also try to describe how the windows would look. Should use a half screen as well. Motion is deferred until the next meeting. We will meet at 7PM on the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Need to have them attend. We will require that the energy panels not be low-E. There is a big difference in color and design. There will be a big difference between the windows not changed and the ones proposed by the owners in this application. Should also mention to the owners that the Energy panels will trap moisture.

9:00-WAVE Reference is made to #531 Mass. Ave. the brown house. What is the history in the district. Checked out very carefully with Nina. Moving buildings All in Certificate of Appropriateness. If the buildings cannot be used in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness, even if replicated new construction results in a voiding of the old certificate. O the engineering reports too expensive to move the old buildings. They can replicate the old buildings contrary to the C of A which sought a adaptive re-use of the old buildings. What is more appropriate for the district. Look at the buildings individually starting with the blue house. Try to find ways to use the white barn. AR drawing existing buildings HDC with the C of A allowed all three to be relocated to allow an entrance to the parking lot from Mass. Ave. All the buildings need to shift up hill. Need to have the original buildings to preserve the scale. We may have to do a little trading to significant parts. KAB Allowance of adaptive re-use was a compromise. Acton has nothing like the West Acton Historic District in any other part of town. If the original scheme won't work, what would be the result of letting go of the buildings, potentially abandoning the original scheme? Restraint is needed. What if the white barn was used as a façade? Preserve a part of it, not let go of the whole thing.

MM Adaptive reuse was a compromise. If there is no constraint owners could do what the zoning bylaws permit. Still don't have a building plan, an empty site, not the village as contemplated with economic constraints.

AR Mathias call to see how it went. He expressed more sympathy for our concerns. Knows we won't go with removing all three buildings. Move the barn to the end. A better way to turn the corner and signal the end of the line. The mansard roof is not adaptive to a walk out basement. Put some design energy into the project. The mansard might be more a

village component. The barn better signals the end of the village. The barn is an out building. Expect it to be near natural setting. Poor departure point.

DH If you demolish the buildings you need a new application not just an amendment. Not a fan of replication. What about the monstrosity in back? Is it needed now? Reject it. You can change the forms. Could see a scheme of synergy with the park across the street. The house, barn and blue house could form a courtyard and something different with the rest of the site. Doesn't present a half-dozen ideas.

KAB What happened? Applicants took a chance to push through to meet a conservation deadline paving the parking lot. The decision was made before wetlands by-laws changed. Comprehensive permit needed for completion by June 2 of that year. There were no engineering reports initially.

AR Not sure about adaptive reuse. Residential scale ruined footprint of brown house.

KAB Start over. Consider moving them in back. Different in front depending on design and scale. Move blue house over away from the end. It is too choppy and discordant. Move brown house and chop off part of the white barn. Look at other possibilities to do a barn over.

MM If they present a new application it needs to be really spectacular to enhance the district. They could rework the plan making the barn the end building and move the blue house to the left. The brown house the most altered bring it further forward. Do they really need so much office space to work with?

KAB links don't work.

DH Take away links. Separate the office buildings don't need links to hide what is in the back. But if they present good architecture, they won't need to hide anything. They have to move the blue house.

AR Float ideas for moving buildings around. Replication to have old factory look. The old barn has an "ell" to it. It is the size of a two-car garage. The structure report suggests sawing off the front and rebuilding the back. The Certificate of Appropriateness is due by the end of June. Should be extended; need vote. Can't abandon the project but need to keep options in mind. Press reuse of the buildings. Do we let the C of A expire or invite a new design. New plans will require a public hearing. Next public hearing is for April 10, 2012 at 8PM for P-V panels on Spruce St.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06PM.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David T. Barrat".

David T. Barrat,  
Secretary